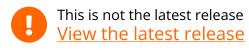


Home > Statistics > Labour > Employment and unemployment > Labour Force, Australia > February 2021



Labour Force, Australia

Headline estimates of employment, unemployment, underemployment, participation and hours worked from the monthly Labour Force Survey

Reference period February 2021

Released 18/03/2021

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Key statistics

Seasonally adjusted estimates for February 2021:

- Unemployment rate decreased to 5.8%.
- Participation rate remained at 66.1%.
- Employment increased to 13,006,900.

- Employment to population ratio increased to 62.3%.
- Underemployment rate increased to 8.5%.
- Monthly hours worked increased by 102 million hours.

	Jan-2021	Feb-2021	Monthly change	Monthly change (%)	Yearly change	Yearly change (%)
Seasonally adjusted						
Employed people	12,918,200	13,006,900	88,700	0.7%	-1,800	0.0%
Unemployed people	875,100	805,200	-69,900	-8.0%	109,500	15.7%
Unemployment rate	6.3%	5.8%	-0.5 pts	na	0.8 pts	na
Underemployment rate	8.1%	8.5%	0.4 pts	na	-0.1 pts	na
Participation rate	66.1%	66.1%	0.1 pts	na	0.2 pts	na
Monthly hours worked in all jobs	1,665 million	1,767 million	102 million	6.1%	3 million	0.2%

Estimates of changes throughout this release are calculated using un-rounded level estimates and may be different from, but are more accurate than, movements obtained from the rounded level estimates.

Survey impacts and changes

Quarterly rebenchmarking of labour force statistics

The ABS has revised the original Labour Force series for the previous two years to reflect the latest available preliminary and final estimates of the Estimated Resident Population. This quarterly process ensures that the Labour Force series promptly reflect any change in population trends and minimises the size of revisions that can occur when the series are rebenchmarked following each Census of Population and Housing.

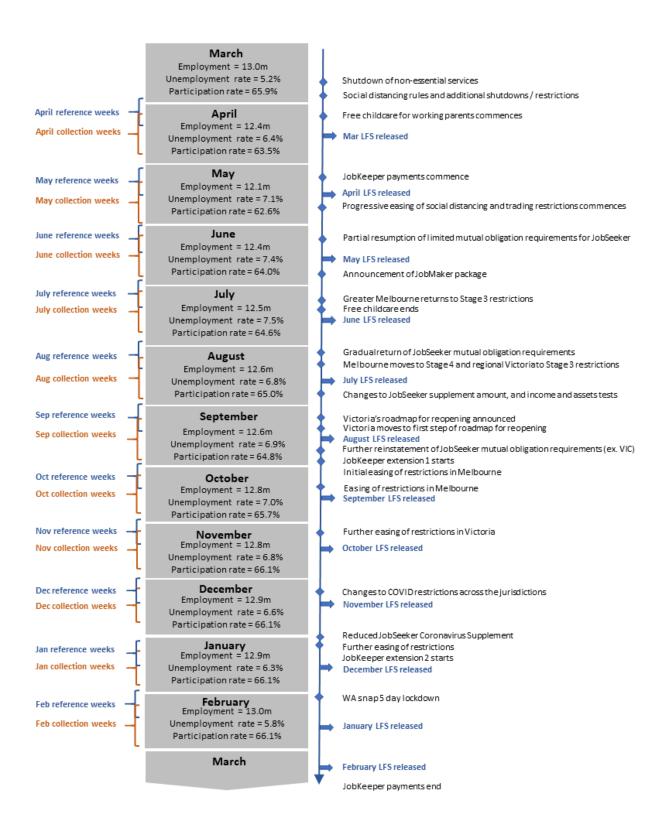
In response to COVID-19 related changes in travel, the ABS has been revising preliminary Net Overseas Migration estimates more frequently. Net Overseas Migration estimates are a component of population estimates, from which Labour Force benchmarks are produced. These revisions have been incorporated into the quarterly rebenchmarking revisions. For more information, please refer to 'Net Overseas Migration revisions in Labour Force benchmarks during COVID-19 (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/apr-2020#covid-19-impacts-and-changes) '.

The usually resident civilian population in December 2020 was revised down by around 0.1% (around 20,500 people). Given the largest source of revisions to population estimates and survey benchmarks are revisions to net overseas migration estimates, the largest revisions were to age groups which comprise a higher share of migration. For example, the largest revision was to the number of people age 20-24, which was revised down by around 1.1% in December.

Revisions to original series also result in revisions to seasonally adjusted series.

Survey response and timeline

The February Labour Force Survey was run in respect of the two weeks from Sunday 31 January to Saturday 13 February, and collected over the period from Sunday 7 February to Saturday 27 February.



The ABS would like to thank Australians for their continued support in responding to our surveys during such a difficult time, given how critically important this information is.

Seasonal adjustment and trend estimates

Given the extent of change in Labour Force time series, the ABS temporarily suspended trend series during the COVID period and moved to using forward factors for seasonal

adjustment, rather than the usual concurrent adjustment approach. The forward factors approach is better suited to managing seasonal adjustment during a period of sustained disruption, as summarised in <u>Methods changes during the COVID-19 period (/articles/methods-changes-during-covid-19-period)</u>.

All estimates within the commentary, including information for the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, refer to seasonally adjusted data.

For more information, please refer to 'Suspension of trend series and changes to seasonal adjustment during the COVID-19 period (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/apr-2020#covid-19-impacts-and-changes).'

To support the continuing use of forward factors through the COVID period, the ABS will be undertaking an 'Extraordinary Annual Series Review' of Labour Force series, ahead of the release of April 2021 data (on 20 May 2021). The outcome of this process will be summarised in a future release.

Treatment of people on JobKeeper, JobSeeker or stood down

People paid through the JobKeeper wage subsidy, in receipt of JobSeeker payments, or stood down by their employer are classified as follows in the Labour Force Survey. This approach:

- is consistent with the long-standing concepts and practices used in the Labour Force Survey; and
- has not resulted in any changes to the <u>Labour Force Survey questionnaire (/ methodologies/labour-force-australia-methodology/feb-2021#data-download)</u>.

The ABS will update this information if new scenarios emerge or the conditions of existing scenarios change over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. People paid through the JobKeeper wage subsidy: employed

The ABS expects that people who are paid through the JobKeeper scheme will answer the questions in a way that results in them being classified as employed, regardless of the hours they work (e.g. even if they are stood down). People paid through JobKeeper may work less hours, the same hours, or more hours, than usual.

Under the JobKeeper program, eligible businesses and not-for-profit organisations affected by COVID-19 can elect to receive a subsidy to support their employment of eligible employees. Some self-employed people are also eligible to receive the JobKeeper payment.

Employers will pay these employees a wage, within their existing employment relationship,

supporting an ongoing attachment to a job.

2. People in receipt of the JobSeeker payment: it depends on their labour market activity

People who receive the JobSeeker or other similar government payments are not automatically classified as unemployed (just as those classified as unemployed will not necessarily be in receipt of a government payment) and how they are categorised depends on how they answer questions around labour market activity.

The JobSeeker payment is paid to people who are looking for work or are sick or injured and cannot undertake their usual work or study for a short time, and who meet the eligibility requirements. People can also receive the JobSeeker payment if they have a job, if they meet a low income test.

Recent changes to the JobSeeker program related to COVID-19 also meant that some recipients did not have to meet the usual mutual obligation requirements, such as looking for work. As these obligations are reinstated, changes may lead to increases in active job search and an increase in the number of people classified as unemployed in future months.

To be classified as unemployed in Labour Force statistics, a person must:

- have actively looked for full-time or part-time work in the last four weeks; and
- be available for work in the reference week.

People who were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then are also classified as unemployed.

3. People not working any hours, including those who were stood down: it depends on their job attachment and pay, and potentially other labour market activity

A person will be classified as employed if they:

- had taken any kind of paid leave;
- were away from their job for any reason (e.g. they were stood down), and were paid for some part of the previous 4 weeks (which could include wages subsidised through the JobKeeper scheme); or
- were away from their job for four weeks or less for any reason, without pay, but believe they still have a job to go back to (e.g. they were stood down, with no pay).

If a person is away from their job for four weeks or more without pay, or they believe they no longer have a job to be absent from, they will be classified as:

- unemployed if they have actively looked for work, and are available to start work; or
- not in the labour force if they have not looked for work and/or are not available to start work.

There will be a range of ways in which people will have been stood down without work as a result of COVID-19. Some may be stood down with pay, some through paid leave (e.g. long service leave, annual leave, etc) and some without pay. Some people will perceive that they still have a job (but just no hours at the moment), while others will consider they have lost their job.

These differences are effectively captured using Labour Force Survey questions, which support the ABS to effectively categorise people and produce key measures of the labour market.

People stood down without pay from late March through to early May 2020 were away from their job for four weeks or more and therefore were no longer considered employed in May. This explains part of the further fall in employment in May 2020.

For further information, please email <u>labour.statistics@abs.gov.au</u> (<u>mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au</u>).

Articles and other information

This months Labour Force release includes:

- Insights into hours worked (/articles/insights-hours-worked-february-2021)
- <u>Changing female employment over time (/articles/changing-female-employment-over-time)</u>

For a list of previously published LFS articles, see the <u>Article archive (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release#article-archive)</u>.

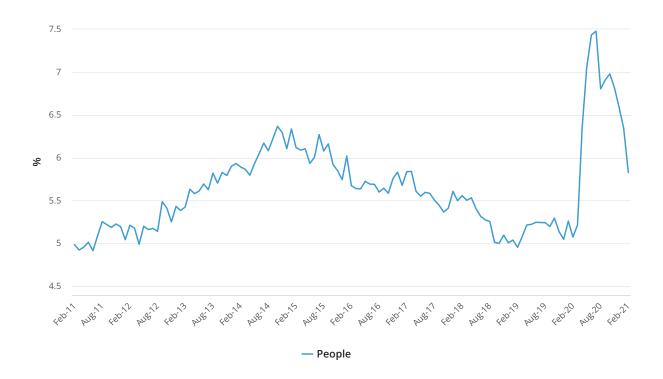
Additional spreadsheets and pivot tables are published in <u>Labour Force, Australia</u>, <u>Detailed (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release)</u> one week after this release, while longitudinal labour force microdata are released in the ABS DataLab, one day after the detailed release (see <u>Microdata: Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6602.0History+of+Changes0Australia)</u>).

Unemployment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in February 2021:

- The unemployment rate decreased 0.5 pts to 5.8% (0.8 pts higher than a year ago)
- Unemployed people decreased by 69,900 to 805,200 (and increased by 109,500 over the year to February 2021)
- The youth unemployment rate decreased 1.1 pts to 12.9% (and increased by 0.5 pts over the year to February 2021)

Unemployment rate, Seasonally adjusted



Employment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in February 2021:

• Employment increased by 88,700 people (0.7%) to 13,006,900 people

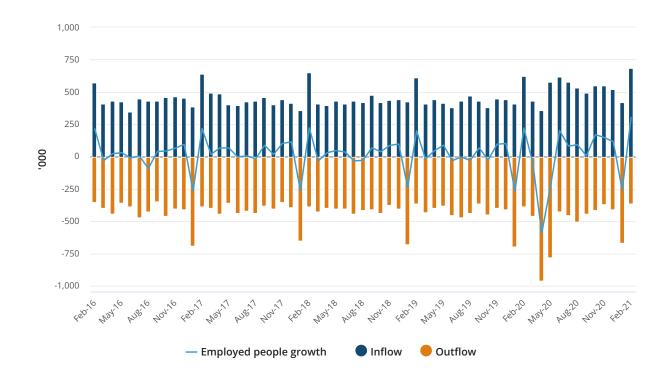
• Over the year to February 2021, employment decreased 1,800 people, less than 0.1%

See the article <u>Changing female employment over time (/articles/changing-female-employment-over-time)</u> for further analysis.

Flows into and out of employment

Underpinning this net increase in the number of employed people are extensive flows of people into and out of employment. Around 680,000 people entered employment (i.e. they were not employed in January but were employed in February), while around 360,000 people left employment (i.e. they were employed in January but were not employed in February). This contrasts with the previous month, where around 420,000 people entered employment and around 670,000 people left employment.

Monthly inflows, outflows and employment growth, Original

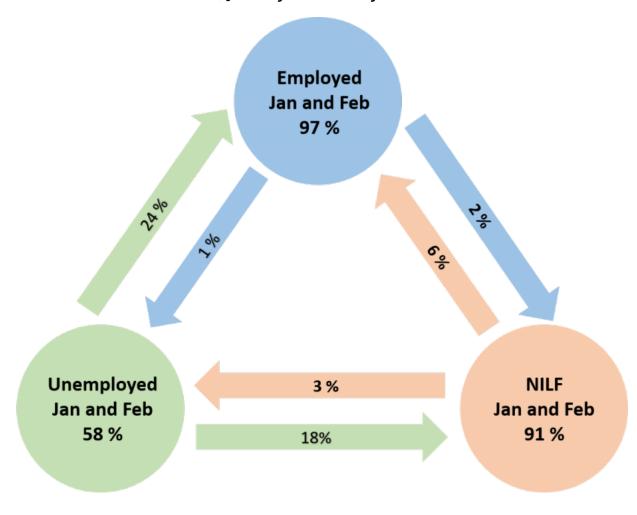


Note: As the inflows and outflows analysis is based on the matched sample (around 80% of the sample), and the original employment growth is based on the entire sample and the latest months weight, the (net) sum of the inflows and outflows does not necessarily equal the 'net' employment growth.

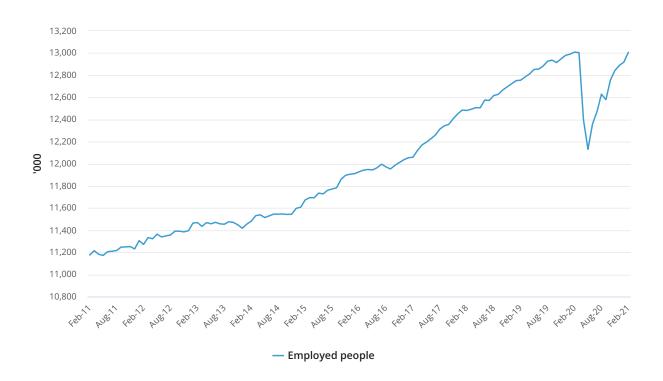
The following diagram shows the proportion of people moving between employment, unemployment and not in the labour force between January and February (based on the matched sample). It shows that:

- 97% of people employed in January were also employed in February (with 1% moving to unemployment and 2% to not in the labour force)
- 58% of people unemployed in January were also unemployed in February (with 24% moving to employment and 18% to not in the labour force)
- 91% of people not in the labour force in January were also not in the labour force in February (with 6% moving to employment and 3% to unemployment)

Flows in labour force status, January to February



Employed people, Seasonally adjusted



Full-time and part-time employment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in February 2021:

- Full-time employment increased by 89,100 to 8,895,000 people, and part-time employment decreased by 500 to 4,111,900 people
- Over the year to February 2021, full-time employment increased by 5,500 people and part-time employment decreased by 7,300 people
- The part-time share of employment over the past 12 months remained at 31.6%

Employment-to-population ratio

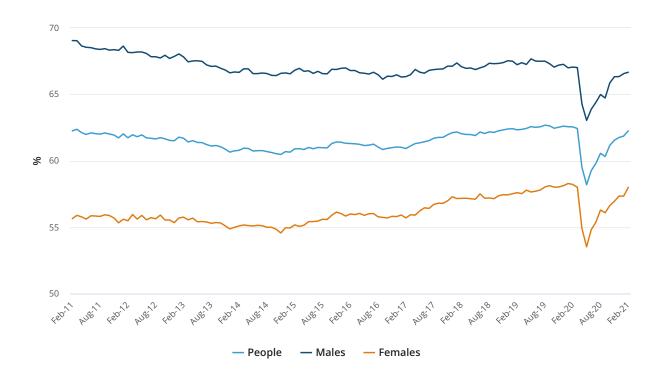
In seasonally adjusted terms, in February 2021:

• The employment-to-population ratio increased by 0.4 pts to 62.3%, and has decreased by 0.3 pts from the same time last year

The employment-to-population ratio provides a measure of employment relative to the size

of the population.

Employment-to-population ratio, Seasonally adjusted



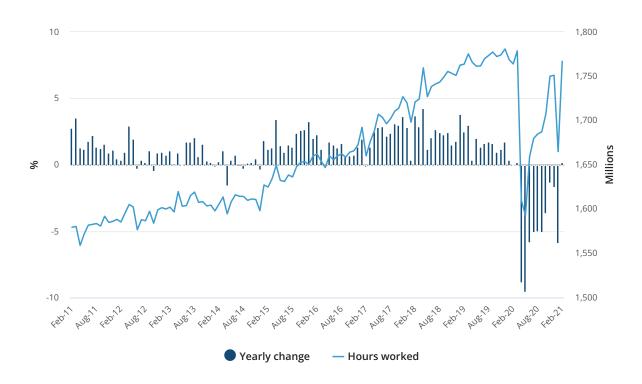
Hours worked

In seasonally adjusted terms, in February 2021, monthly hours worked in all jobs:

- Increased by 102 million hours (6.1%) to 1,767 million hours
- Increased by 0.2% over the year, which is larger than the less than 0.1% decrease in employed people

See the article <u>Insights into hours worked (/articles/insights-hours-worked-february-2021)</u> for more.

Monthly hours worked in all jobs, Seasonally adjusted

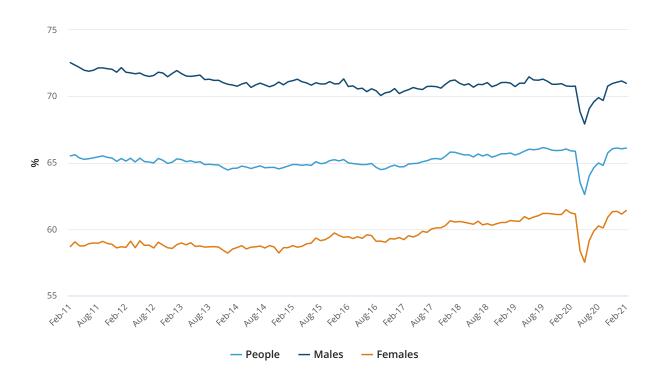


Participation

In seasonally adjusted terms, in February 2021, the participation rate:

- Remained at 66.1%, and has increased 0.2 pts over the year to February 2021
- Decreased by 0.2 pts for men (to 71.0%) and increased by 0.3 pts for women (to 61.4%)

Participation rate, Seasonally adjusted

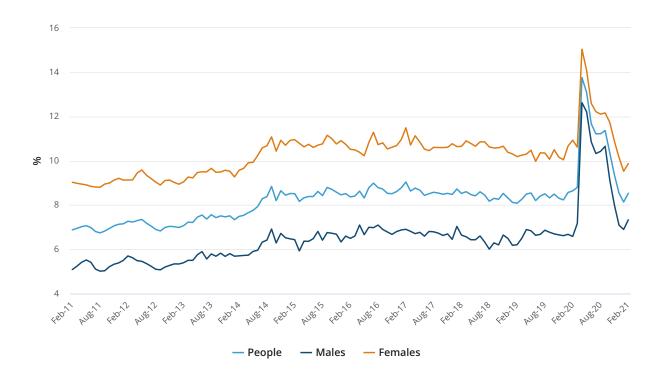


Underemployment

In seasonally adjusted terms, in February 2021:

- The underemployment rate increased by 0.4 pts to 8.5% (0.1 pts lower than a year ago)
- The underutilisation rate decreased by 0.1 pts to 14.4%

Underemployment rate, Seasonally adjusted



States and territories

February 2021, Seasonally adjusted

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Noi Tei
Employed people	4,113,100	3,439,300	2,603,800	847,400	1,369,400	261,200	
Employed people - monthly change	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	0.1%	1.5%	
Employment to population ratio	61.9%	62.8%	62.2%	58.1%	63.7%	58.2%	
Employment to population ratio - monthly change	0.6 pts	0.5 pts	0.5 pts	0.4 pts	0.0 pts	0.8 pts	

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Noı Teı
Unemployment rate	5.6%	5.6%	6.1%	6.8%	6.0%	5.7%	
Unemployment rate - monthly change	-0.4 pts	-0.7 pts	-0.8 pts	-0.2 pts	-0.1 pts	-0.2 pts	
Underemployment rate	8.1%	9.1%	8.3%	8.6%	8.7%	9.0%	
Underemployment rate - monthly change	0.1 pts	0.6 pts	-0.3 pts	0.2 pts	1.6 pts	0.1 pts	
Participation rate	65.6%	66.6%	66.2%	62.4%	67.7%	61.7%	
Participation rate - monthly change	0.4 pts	0.0 pts	-0.1 pts	0.3 pts	-0.1 pts	0.7 pts	

Rotation group analysis

Sample composition and rotation

The Labour Force Survey sample can be thought of as comprising eight sub-samples (rotation groups), with each sub-sample remaining in the survey for eight months, and one group "rotating out" each month and being replaced by a new group "rotating in". As seven-eighths of the sample are common from one month to the next, changes in the estimates reflect real changes in the labour market, rather than changes in the sample. The replacement sample is generally selected from the same geographic areas as the outgoing one, as part of a representative sampling approach.

The sample comprises three components:

- the matched common sample (people who responded in both the current month and previous month)
- the unmatched common sample (people who responded in the current month but who did not respond in the previous month, or vice versa)
- the incoming rotation group (replacing people who rotated out)

The matched common sample describes the change observed for the same respondents in the current and previous month, while the other two components reflect differences between the aggregate labour force status of different groups of people.

While the rotation groups are designed to be representative of the population, the outgoing

and incoming rotation groups will almost always have somewhat different characteristics, as they reflect different households and people. The design of the survey, including the weighting and estimation processes, ensures that these differences are generally relatively minor and do not affect the representativeness of the survey and its estimates. Monthly estimates are designed to be representative, regardless of the relative contribution of the three components of the sample.

The contributions of the three sample components to the original estimates of employed, unemployed and not in the labour force are in the Contribution from sample components to estimates spreadsheet.

Estimates for the incoming and outgoing rotation groups

Incoming and outgoing rotation groups

	January outgoing rotation group	February incoming rotation group	February outgoing rotation group	February estimate (Original)
Employment to population ratio	60.3%	63.1%	60.7%	62.5%
Full-time employment to population ratio	41.9%	43.8%	42.3%	43.0%
Unemployment rate	7.0%	6.2%	6.0%	6.3%
Participation rate	64.9%	67.3%	64.6%	66.7%

States and territories

In addition to analysis across the entire sample, the ABS also undertakes similar analysis for the responding sample in each state and territory each month, and highlights where there is a notable change for users to be aware of. For example, in November 2020, the incoming rotation group in Queensland had a higher unemployment rate than the group it replaced, and had a higher unemployment rate than the average over the matched sample. As with any notable month-to-month movement of this nature in state and territory estimates, the ABS recommends exercising a degree of caution in interpreting short-term changes.

As for its reporting for the entire sample, where the ABS has not highlighted a notable incoming rotation group effect, any larger changes should therefore be considered to reflect a broader change across the sample.

Managing COVID-19 impacts on the incoming rotation groups

In response to COVID-19 and the suspension of face-to-face interviewing, the ABS has boosted the size of sample for the incoming rotation groups from June to December 2020 to ensure response level were around the same as pre-COVID-19 rotation groups. This has ensured a comparable level of fully responding households to the pre-COVID period.

Between April and September 2020 additional weighting treatments were used to effectively account for a slightly higher level of non-response. No such treatment was required after September, with the response patterns returning close to the pre-COVID period.

Comparability with seasonally adjusted data

The gross flows and rotation group data are in original terms only, and are included to provide additional information on the month-to-month movements. They have a considerable level of inherent sampling variability, which is specifically adjusted for in the seasonally adjusted series.

While trend data usually provides the best measure of the underlying behaviour of the labour market, in times of large changes in the labour market, seasonally adjusted data provides a better estimate of the most recent months. The ABS has temporarily suspended the trend series until labour market indicators become more stable, see <u>Suspension of trend series and changes to seasonal adjustment during the COVID-19 period (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/apr-2020#covid-19-impacts-and-changes)</u>.

Contribution from sample components to estimates

<u>▶ Download XLS</u>
[100 KB]

Data downloads

Labour Force Survey results are released in three stages.

- 1. Spreadsheets of the headline indicators are published in this release
- 2. Additional, more detailed spreadsheets and pivot tables are published in <u>Labour Force</u>, <u>Australia</u>, <u>Detailed</u> (/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/ <u>labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release</u>) one week after this first release

3. Longitudinal labour force microdata are released in the ABS DataLab on a monthly basis, one day after the detailed release (see Microdata: Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia (Microdata: Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/

See the <u>Survey output (/methodologies/labour-force-australia-methodology/jan-2021#survey-output)</u> section of Labour Force, Australia methodology for more information.

Labour Force status

Table 1. Labour force status by Sex, Australia - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>**Download XLS**</u>
[6.97 MB]

Table 4. Labour force status by Sex, New South Wales - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>**Download XLS**</u> [4.28 MB]

Table 5. Labour force status by Sex, Victoria - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>**Download XLS**</u> [4.29 MB]

Table 6. Labour force status by Sex, Queensland - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u> ◆ Download XLS</u>

[4.31 MB]

Table 7. Labour force status by Sex, South Australia - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>**Download XLS**</u> [4.32 MB]

Table 8. Labour force status by Sex, Western Australia - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>**Download XLS**</u> [4.32 MB]

Table 9. Labour force status by Sex, Tasmania - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>**Download XLS**</u>
[4.52 MB]

Table 10. Labour force status by Sex, Northern Territory - Trend and Original

<u> → Download XLS</u>

[5.14 MB]

Table 10a. Labour force status by Sex, Northern Territory - Seasonally adjusted

[277.5 KB]

Table 11. Labour force status by Sex, Australian Capital Territory - Trend and Original

▶ Download XLS

[4.44 MB]

Table 11a. Labour force status by Sex, Australian Capital Territory - Seasonally adjusted

<u> → Download XLS</u>

[277.5 KB]

Table 12. Labour force status by Sex, State and Territory - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

▶ Download XLS

[42.08 MB]

Table 12a. Labour force status by Sex, Territory - Seasonally adjusted

▶ Download XLS

[484 KB]

Table 13. Labour force status for 15-24 year olds by Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u> → Download XLS</u>

[<u>6.97 MB</u>]

Table 15. Labour force status for 15-24 year olds by Educational attendance (full-time) and Sex

↓ Download XLS

[1.61 MB]

Table 16. Labour force status for 15-24 year olds by State, Territory and Educational attendance (full-time)

<u> ▶ Download XLS</u>

[8.52 MB]

Table 17. Labour force status for 15-19 year olds by Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u> → Download XLS</u>

[5.35 MB]

Table 18. Labour force status for 15-64 year olds by Sex - Trend, Seasonally

adjusted and Original

<u>→</u> Download XLS [6.97 MB]

Hours worked

Table 19. Monthly hours worked in all jobs by Employed full-time, part-time and Sex and by State and Territory - Trend and Seasonally adjusted

<u>**Download XLS**</u>
[3.1 MB]

Table 19a. Monthly hours worked in all jobs by Employed full-time, part-time and Sex and Territory - Seasonally adjusted

<u>→ Download XLS</u>
[94.5 KB]

Table 21. Quarterly hours worked in all jobs by Market and Non-market sector - Seasonally adjusted

<u>→ Download XLS</u>[83 KB]

Underemployment and underutilisation

Table 22. Underutilised persons by Age and Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>→ Download XLS</u>
[46.19 MB]

Table 23. Underutilised persons by State and Territory and Sex - Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original

<u>→ Download XLS</u>
[62.43 MB]

Table 23a. Underutilised persons by Territory and Sex - Seasonally adjusted

<u>→ Download XLS</u> [721.5 KB]

Table 24. Underutilised persons by Age and Sex (expanded analytical series)

<u>→</u> Download XLS

Table 25. Underutilised persons by State, Territory and Sex (expanded analytical series)

Download XLS[669.5 KB]

Flows into and out of employment

GM1 - Labour force status and Gross changes (flows) by Age, Sex, State and Territory, February 1991 onwards

<u> ▶</u> Download XLSX

[96.85 MB]

All time series spreadsheets

All time series spreadsheets

[42.11 MB]

Article archive

Understanding the labour force

<u>Understanding full-time and part-time work (/articles/understanding-full-time-and-part-time-work) (January 2021)</u>

<u>Understanding differences between Labour Force employment statistics and Weekly Payroll</u>
<u>Jobs (/articles/understanding-differences-between-labour-force-employment-statistics-and-weekly-payroll-jobs) (April 2020)</u>

<u>Classifying people during the COVID-19 period (https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/classifying-people-labour-force-survey-during-covid-19-period) (March 2020)</u>

<u>Labour Force Explained (/articles/labour-force-explained)</u> (September 2017)

<u>Understanding the Australian labour force using ABS statistics (https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features999Dec%202013)</u> (December 2013)

<u>Understanding full-time / part-time status in the Labour Force Survey (https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features4Sep%202013)</u> (September 2013)

Employment level estimates versus employment to population ratio explained (https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features2Jan%202012) (January 2012)

Employment and jobs

<u>Insights into casual employment, occupation and industry (https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/insights-casual-employment-occupation-and-industry)</u> (November 2020)

Strong employment growth for non-employees (/articles/strong-employment-growth-non-employees) (August 2020)

<u>State and territory employment and hours worked (/articles/state-and-territory-employment-and-hours-worked)</u> (August 2020)

Employment and unemployment: An International Perspective (/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective) (August 2020)

Flows into and out of employment and unemployment (/articles/flows-and-outemployment-and-unemployment) (June 2020)

Insights into industry and occupation (/articles/insights-industry-and-occupation) (May 2020)

Employment and unemployment: An international perspective (/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective-may-2020) (May 2020)

Employment and unemployment: An international perspective (/articles/employment-and-unemployment-international-perspective-april-2020) (April 2020)

People moving into or out of employment or unemployment every month (/articles/people-moving-or-out-employment-or-unemployment-every-month) (March 2020)

How many people work one hour a week (https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6202.0Main%20Features3Jan%202019) (January 2019)

<u>Leave entitlements (https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/6291.0.55.003Main%20Features6Nov%202015)</u> (November 2015)

<u>Duration of employment (https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/6291.0.55.003Main%20Features7Nov%202015)</u> (November 2015)

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<u>Labour Force, Australia methodology, February 2021</u>